

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 291455Z DEC 75
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UNCLAS DAMASCUS 5183

FOR WANDA ALE OIM/SAD FOR YINGLING

ATHENS FOR RTDO-LEFEAVER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, SY

SUBJECT: MARYLAND STATE IOGA TRADE MISSION: DAMASCUS PORTION

1. SUMMARY. GATCH CONCLUDED ADVANCE VISIT DECEMBER 28. HE
AND EMBASSY BELIEVE THERE ARE GOOD LONG-TERM POSSIBILITIES
HERE FOR MISSION MEMBERS. SPECIFICS FOLLOW. END SUMMARY.

2. DAMASCUS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SECRETARY NAHAS FURNISHED
PRELIMINARY LIST OF APPROXIMATELY 16 HOSPITALS SCHEDULED
TO BE BUILT UNDER NEW FIVE YEAR PLAN. THESE RANGE FROM
100 TO 600 BEDS.

3. NAHAS ALSO OUTLINED PROCEDURES UNDER WHICH MISSION MEMBERS
ACTING AS A CONSORTIUM OR INDIVIDUALLY WOULD BE ABLE TO
DO BUSINESS IN SYRIA. THEY MAY ENTER INTO JOINT VENTURES
EITHER WITH A STATE ORGANIZATION OR WITH PRIVATE
SECTOR FIRMS. THE PRIVATE SECTOR FIRMS CAN ALSO
ACT AS AGENTS FOR MISSION MEMBERS. (EMBASSY COMMERCIAL
SECTION WILL IDENTIFY SUCH PRIVATE SECTOR FIRMS FOR
MISSION MEMBERS.) NAHAS WILL RECEIVE MISSION IN
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HIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CAPACITY AND WILL BE

PREPARED TO EXPLAIN POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENTS IN DETAIL. HE INDICATED THAT, IN ADDITION TO HOSPITAL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM, THERE ARE MANY AND VARIED CIVIL WORKS IN FIVE YEAR PLAN, INCLUDING WATER TREATMENT PLANTS, SEWAGE SYSTEMS, ROADS, PUBLIC HOUSING ETC.

4. DEPUTY MINISTER OF PLANNING HELOU ALSO DISCUSSED FIVE YEAR PLAN IN TERMS OF ALMOST DOUBLING NUMBER OF HOSPITAL BEDS OVER LIFE OF PLAN. HE BELIEVED MISSION MEMBERS MIGHT SUCCESSFULLY COMPETE IN BIDDING FOR HOSPITAL PROJECTS. HE ADVISED OBTAINING LOCAL PARTNER OR AGENT.

5. BOTH HELOU AND NAHAS INDICATED NEED FOR US FIRMS TO BE COMPETITIVE IN PRICE WITH EUROPEANS AND THAT US CHANCES WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED IF PREFERENTIAL FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS WERE INCLUDED IN ANY RESPONSE TO TENDERS. IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR MARYLAND NATIONAL BANK REPRESENTATIVE TO GIVE PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATION TO THIS ASPECT.

6. FINALLY, GATCH AND EMBASSY COMMERCIAL OFFICER CALLED ON DR. BITAR, DEAN OF DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL. HE OUTLINED PLAN FOR A 640-BED TEACHING HOSPITAL. STUDY FOR THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN COMPLETED BY UK HOSPITAL CONSULTANTS (PEARSON) AND UNIVERSITY IS GETTING READY TO SEEK BIDS FOR ITS CONSTRUCTION. BITAR SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING DISCUSS STUDY IN DEPTH WITH MISSION MEMBERS AND WELCOMED POSSIBILITY THEY MIGHT BID.

7. COMMENT: UNLIKE SAUDI ARABIA, DEVELOPMENT ATMOSPHERE IN SYRIA TEMPERED BY KNOWLEDGE OF SYRIAN FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS. THIS IS WHY EMPHASIS WAS PLACED DURING CONVERSATIONS ON NEED FOR US FIRMS TO BE COMPETITIVE IN PRICES AND ON DESIRABILITY OF OFFERING EASY TERMS FOR SOME PORTION OF ANY BID MADE. NONETHELESS SYRIA DOES HAVE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AND SEEMS DETERMINED TO EXECUTE AN AMBITIOUS FIVE YEAR PLAN. THERE WOULD BE BUSINESS
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FOR THE MISSION IF RIGHT APPROACH CAN BE FOUND.
MURPHY

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